

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

I. On page 4 of the specification under the heading entitled “Brief Summary of the Invention:”

Delete paragraph 6 starting with “It is another object and ending with “rack and tray assembly.”

II. On pages 4-5, paragraph 8, of the specification under the heading entitled “Brief Summary of the Invention:”

In accordance with the present invention, a rack and tray assembly has been devised for storing foot apparel and collecting debris and liquids released therefrom, the assembly comprising ~~a cabinet having left and right sidewalls integrally connected to top and bottom sides collectively forming a box-like structure having an interior compartment for housing therein~~ a folding frame structure comprising left and right legs and a tray support assembly situated and mounted thereinbetween for supporting at least one tray; the tray comprising inclined sides extending upwardly from a base and terminating an upper rim collectively forming a reservoir for holding and retaining water, snow, and debris released from foot apparel; the upper rim comprising a ledge having an upper exposed surface for receiving thereon a grate and a lower exposed surface for engaging an upper portion of guide rails fixedly attached to the left and right sidewalls ~~for left and right tray rails integrally made part of and extending downwardly from the tray support assembly,~~ for left and right tray rails integrally made part of and extending downwardly from the tray support assembly, which substantially serve to position the tray above the floor to prevent inadvertent spillage ~~while in use to support foot apparel bearing water, snow, and debris~~ of water, snow and debris contained therein.

III. On pages 5-6 of the specification under the heading entitled “Brief Description of the Drawings:”

A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIGURE 1 is a front perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray interiorly fitted with a grate ~~collectively positioned within an interior compartment of a cabinet~~ for supporting foot apparel atop thereof;

FIGURE 2 is a top plan view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray;

FIGURE 3 is a front perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray;

FIGURE 4 is a top plan view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray interiorly fitted with a grate;

FIGURE 5 is a front perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a ~~tray fitted with a grate having a pair of shoes resting thereon~~ folding frame structure arranged with a pair of tray support assemblies each comprising a tray with an interiorly situated grate collectively positioned therebelow;

FIGURE 6 is a front perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a folding frame structure fitted with a pair of tray support assemblies each comprising a tray positioned therebelow;

FIGURE 7 is a mirror end view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a pair of tray support assemblies positioned in between elongate vertical members of a leg;

FIGURE 8 is a top plan view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray support assembly positioned in between left and right legs;

FIGURE 9 is a front cross sectional view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention taken on line 9—9 of FIG. 8 illustrating a pair of tray support assemblies positioned in between left and right legs;

FIGURE 10 is a side elevational view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating an L-shaped member having upper and lower positioning plates;

FIGURE 11 is a front elevational view of the alternative embodiment of the

present invention illustrating a rod having threaded ends situated in between a pair of L-shaped members each having upper and lower positioning plates;

FIGURE 12 is a perspective view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray rail comprising a pair of L-shaped members each having upper and lower positioning plates and connectively fastened together by a rod;

FIGURE 13 is a front perspective view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray suspended below a plurality of support members by a pair of tray rails; and

FIGURE 14 is a partial perspective view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray rail comprising a pair of L-shaped members connected to and suspended below a plurality of support members.

IV. On pages 7-8 of the specification under the heading entitled “Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment:”

Delete paragraph 2 starting with “Referring now to FIG. 1, there is shown generally at 10 a rack and tray assembly” and ending with “the cabinet is structural reinforced by a back panel 34 attached along a back leading edge 36 of the left and right sidewalls and top and bottom sides”.

V. On pages 8-10, paragraph 3, of the specification under the heading entitled “Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment:”

~~The tray 26 primarily serves as a reservoir for collecting water, snow and debris released from the foot apparel.~~ Referring now to FIG. 1, there is shown generally at 10 a tray 26 primarily serving as a reservoir for collecting water, snow and debris released from foot apparel 28 situated atop a grate 48 interiorly fitted within the tray. As shown in FIG. 2, the tray preferably comprises a base 38 integrally connected to inclined sides 40 extending upwardly therefrom, along the periphery thereof and terminating at an upper

rim 42. The inclined sides primarily function to prevent the accumulation of debris thereabout while allowing continuous flow downwardly toward the base to ensure full usage of the tray's volumetric capacity. In most applications, the inclined sides are positioned outwardly in angular fashion by approximately 25° to an axis perpendicular to the base to further this purpose, as best illustrated along path M in FIG. 3. The upper rim 42 comprises a ledge 44 having an upper exposed surface 46 for receiving thereon [[a]] grate 48 and a lower exposed surface 50 for engaging an upper portion 52 of the guide rail. Integrally made part of the rim is a supportive wall 54 extending upwardly from the upper exposed surface of the ledge 44. The supportive wall primarily serves as means for maintaining the orientation and position of the grate while positioned atop the upper exposed surface and reinforcing the structural integrity of the rim 42 while bearing loads comprising foot apparel, water, snow, and debris. As shown in FIG. 4, the grate comprises a frame 56 having an overall geometric configuration corresponding to the arrangement of the ledge insofar to allow the frame to rest entirely upon the upper exposed surface 46. A plurality of support members 58 positioned within and integrally connected to the frame 56 collectively serve as means for supporting foot apparel while simultaneously allowing the passing of water, snow and debris into the tray 26.

Accordingly, the support members are positioned parallel to and spaced equally apart from one another within the frame to form and define a plurality of elongate openings 60. It is noted herein that the orientation and spacing of the supporting braces may vary in each application to accommodate a variety of shoe types yet affording passage of water, snow and debris collectively released therefrom. For instance, the support members of elongate configuration as illustrated in FIG. 4 may extend parallel to a pair of shortened end members 62 of the frame and connect to and terminate at side members 64 of the frame to enhance the overall structural integrity of the grate to the extent of mitigating deformation of the grate upon placing heavily weighted foot apparel thereon. Preferably, the frame as well as the support members fitted therewithin collectively comprises a uniform height suitably corresponding to the height of the supportive wall 54. This configuration ensures that the rim 42 and its structural features do not unduly interfere

with the foot apparel as it is slidably removed from and placed about the grate 48, notably in ~~instances~~ the instance where the tray 26 ~~remains stationary within the cabinet 12 or~~ is used as a standalone device as shown in FIG. ~~[[5]]~~ 1. The grate in its preferred embodiment is constructed of strong lightweight metal coated with vinyl. Lightweight metal suitably serves in strengthening the grate to maintain rigidity while lessening the overall weight of the tray and grate to enhance its handling capacity. The vinyl coating is an attractive inexpensive material to provide corrosion protection to metal that may contact water and snow released from the foot apparel. It is anticipated that any material comprising the above-noted characteristics, such as wood, plastic, carbon fiber, or a combination thereof, may be used to construct the grate providing it offers resistance to premature corrosion during normal usage. In typical applications, the tray preferably comprises a width of approximately 24" and a length of approximately 16", forming a surface area notably capable of holding two large pairs of shoes. In regard to this rectangular dimension and a depth of approximately 1.5", the tray sufficiently comprises a volumetric capacity to hold and retain a liquid and solid mixture released from approximately ten pairs of shoes over a 1-2 week period. More continuous usage, particularly during snowy conditions, may necessitate frequent handling of the tray for purposes of emptying and cleaning or usage of a tray having a larger volumetric capacity to what has been described for the preferred embodiment.

VI. On pages 10-12, paragraph 4, of the specification under the heading entitled "Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment:"

~~In an alternative embodiment, as depicted in FIG. 6, the tray 26 absent the grate 48 is fitted within a folding frame structure 66, collectively capable of supporting foot apparel and collecting and retaining water, snow or debris that may be released therefrom to the likes of the preferred embodiment. This alternative embodiment to the cabinet 12 comprises left and right legs 68, 70 pivotally fastened to at least one tray support assembly 72 situated thereinbetween. Referring now to FIG. 5, the tray 26 and interiorly~~

situated grate 48 may collectively be placed within and supported by a folding frame structure 66, or as shown in FIG. 6, the tray may be suitably arranged within the folding frame structure without the presence of the grate. As shown in FIG. 7, each leg comprises upper and lower elongate horizontal members 68a, 70a, 68b, 70b and a pair of elongate vertical members 68c, 70c each having ends fastened to one another to form a leg of rectangular configuration. In either one of these two embodiments of the present invention, the folding frame structure preferably comprises left and right legs 68, 70 pivotally fastened to at least one tray support assembly 72 situated thereinbetween. Each leg, as shown in FIG. 7, comprises upper and lower elongate horizontal members 68a, 70a, 68b, 70b and a pair of elongate vertical members 68c, 70c each having ends fastened to one another to form a leg of rectangular configuration. Although the legs primarily function to support the tray support assembly, the upper horizontal members may supplement as means for handling the folding frame structure, particularly useful in carrying the folding frame structure 66 from location to location and facilitating assembly and disassembly. Preferably, each leg 68, 70 is integrally construction from a continuous piece of tubing and bent accordingly to form the desired rectangular shape of the leg. Each vertical member comprises an inner face 68d, 70d for engaging and mounting thereon a portion of the tray support assembly. As shown in FIG. 8, each tray support assembly 72 comprises forward and aft horizontal supports 74, 76 positioned parallel to one another with each horizontal support having a pair of ends 74a, 76a affixed to the left and right legs. Each end of the horizontal support comprises a stem 74b, 76b extending outwardly and perpendicular therefrom to engage and fit into an aperture 78 extending into and through the inner face 68d, 70d of each vertical member, which collectively serve as means for allowing the tray support assembly to simultaneously fold together with each of the legs for short- or long-term storage of the folding frame structure 66. Preferably, each stem comprises a predetermined length which allows for secure placement within the aperture while avoiding interference or binding with an outer face 68e, 70e of each vertical member. Like the structure noted for the grate 48, the tray support assembly 72 further comprises a plurality support bars 80 of elongate form

positioned parallel to one another and situated perpendicular and connected at their ends to the horizontal supports 74, 76 to collectively form a plurality of lengthened openings 82, which suitably allow for placement and support of foot apparel while allowing uninhibited passage of water, snow and debris therethrough into the tray 26, as best illustrated in FIGS. 8 and 9. It is noted herein that the size of the lengthened openings may be altered in such a manner to accommodate specific needs, number, or configuration of the foot apparel. In order to prevent frictional binding of the horizontal support with that of the vertical member during pivotal movement, the support bars 80 comprise a predetermined length to establish the tray support assembly's size to fit accordingly within the confines of each leg 68, 70, preferably establishing a ¼" space in between the inner face and horizontal support. To enhance rigidity of the folding frame structure and maintain a perpendicular orientation of the tray support assembly 72 relative to the legs, each horizontal support comprises a pair of angular braces 84 each having top and bottom ends 84a, 84b. As illustrated in FIG. 6, the bottom end of each angular brace comprises an aperture 86 for receiving therethrough a fastener 88, rivet, or equivalent type of fastener which extends into and terminates within each horizontal support 74, 76. The top end of the angular brace is mounted to the vertical member 68c, 70c in such a manner as to allow the angular brace to extend approximately 45° to the longitudinal axis of the tray support assembly 72. Mounting of the angular brace 84 at this preferred angular relation is accomplished by a hook 90 integrally made part of the top end 84a. A pin 92 extending outwardly and perpendicular from the inner face 68d, 70d primarily functions to engage an inner space 90a of the hook and position the angular brace accordingly. In preferred applications, the inner space of the hook comprises a diameter which suitably promotes a frictionally fit about the pin. As shown in FIG. 7, each pin 92 comprises an end cap 94 to prevent the top end 84a of the angular brace from becoming inadvertently disengaged by the occurrence of lateral movement of the tray support assembly 72. A space 96 formed in between the inner face of the vertical member and end cap substantially corresponds to the thickness of the material to construct the angular brace 84, collectively configured to mitigate inadvertent release of

the angular brace from the pin 92 and maintain rigidity to the folding frame structure 66 while in an assemble state. In preventing each of the angular braces from interfering or binding with the inner face 68d, 70d upon collapsing the folding frame structure, each angular brace 84 further comprises an offsetting intermediate member 98 integrally connected to and situated within the top and bottom ends 84a, 84b. The degree to which the angular brace is offset depends on the geometric configuration of the tray support assembly 72 and its ability to move and be located within the confines of the leg.